College Reading & Writing Skills

COMM1085

Week 1: Introduction to College Reading and Writing

# Framework for Module

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Delivery | * Fully online * Hybrid |
| Course Learning Outcomes | 1. Identify purpose, audience, and thesis in a variety of texts  2. Employ critical thinking to analyse source, voice, bias, meaning, argument, and evidence |
| Unit Learning Outcomes | 1.1 Identify reading and writing tasks as they apply to college and the workplace  1.2 Apply pre-reading skills and strategies  1.3 Identify purpose and audience for various readings  2.1 Identify thesis, main ideas, and supporting details in a reading |
| Real-life task that learners should be able to complete by the end of the module | Learners will be able to skim and scan a text in search of relevant text information. |
| Is there a graded evaluation this week? If so, describe briefly. | X No (but students are asked to produce a “diagnostic” writing sample, which is ungraded)  Yes |
| Topic | How to cover topic (engage learners and represent content) |
| Introduction to Course | Text   * Assignment structure * Instructor bio   Activity: Post personal introduction (“Ten-Word Autobiography”) to discussion board |
| Communications vs. English | Text   * English: analyzing literature, themes, etc. * COMM: practical skills with a professional focus   Activity: Ungraded discussion topic   * Share highlights and lowlights of past English classes |
| Communications in the Workplace | Text   * Highlight demand for communications skills by employers * Highlight course description / learning outcomes   Activity: Match workplace scenarios to skills |
| Active Reading | Text   * Explain skimming and scanning techniques   Activity: Hotspot   * Show a variety of texts (e.g. textbook, newspaper article, business report) and students will click on key places (title, intro, conclusion, topic sentences, headings, etc.) |
| Audience and Purpose | Text   * Identify characteristics/features used to describe an intended audience * Introduce idea of writer’s intention, highlight variety of potential “purposes”   Textbook reading   * See textbook Chapter 6.1   Activity: Match Game   * Students have to pair descriptions of audience and purpose with examples of text |
| Topic vs. Thesis | Text   * Define thesis and topic   Activity: Knowledge Check   * Show examples of 3 or 4 texts on same topic and students have to pair them with correct thesis from list |
| Summary | Text   * Audience / purpose 🡪 influence the writer’s choices |
| Evaluation | Ungraded diagnostic writing activity |

# Instructional Content

## Introduction to Course

**TEXT**

This course will help you to develop valuable skills that you can apply at college and in the workforce. COMM1085 will prepare you for the reading and writing tasks you will face in your other courses and for career success after college.

**The Instructional Plan**The Instructional Plan (Content > Course Information) tells you exactly what will be covered in class each week, along with what will be expected of you throughout the term. Please refer to this schedule first if you have questions about assessment due dates or what material is to be covered in class each week.

**Overview of Assessments**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Assignment** | **Weight** |
| **Reading and Grammar Quizzes**   * 5 x 5% | **25%** |
| **Writing Tasks**   * Summary x 5% * Analytical Writing x 10% * Persuasive Writing x 10% * Reflective Writing (“Feedback Journal”) x 5% | **30%** |
| **Research Assignment and Related Tasks**   * LRC (Library) Research Skills — Online Quiz x 5% * Proposal Email x 5% * Comprehensive Outline x 5% * Final Draft x 15% | **30%** |
| **Final writing task**   * Part One (Take-home) x 5% * Part Two (In-class) x 10% | **15%** |
| **TOTAL** | **100%** |

**What can you do to be successful in this course?**

* Complete the weekly activities: this is more of a “skill-based” course than a “knowledge-based” course, so regular practice is more valuable than “cramming”.
* Speak with your instructor early in the semester about special learning needs or preferences to ensure that you have access to the accommodations that you are entitled to.
* Read all assignments and rubrics carefully to ensure that you are satisfying the requirements of each assignment.
* Ask questions if you are unclear about something.
* Hand everything in, even if it seems like an assignment is worth a relatively small amount.
* Hand everything in on time. Late penalties of 10% per day will apply to all assignments unless you are ill and/or have received clearance ahead of time to submit your work past the due date.

**Academic Integrity Policy**

Conestoga College’s Academic Integrity Policy (link to policy?) states that “Academic integrity is expected and required of all Conestoga students. Students are responsible and accountable for personally upholding that integrity and for maintaining control of their own work at all times so that breaches of this policy are less likely to occur. Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Students found guilty of violating Conestoga’s academic integrity principles will be disciplined in accordance with this policy” (Conestoga College, 2012, p.1).

In Week 2 we will begin to explore the concept of “academic integrity” in more detail, so you can feel confident that the work you submit meets the standards of the academic integrity policy. This discussion, which will continue throughout the semester, will examine different kinds of plagiarism, introduce strategies to avoid plagiarism, and share resources that can help you as questions arise during your writing process.

## Communications vs. “English”

(Maybe this doesn’t warrant its own topic, and could be moved to “Communications in Workplace”)

**TEXT**

Before we begin our work in COMM1085: Academic Reading and Writing, it’s worthwhile to have a discussion about what this course is and what this course isn’t. Although it shares some similarities with your high school English courses, it’s also different in several significant ways. To highlight these differences, complete the following activity which asks for you to recall and describe your experiences in previous English courses:

**ACTIVITY**

Survey of experiences in previous reading/writing courses

Students rate on a scale of 1 to 5, from Not at all to Very Much. Hopefully, students would be able to see the overall results of this survey so they can see that their experiences are shared by others

* How much did you enjoy reading fiction, such as novels and short stories, in your English classes? Did you feel like your discussions of these works were relevant and productive?
* Instructor response: COMM1085 asks students to engage with non-fiction material, chosen because it is contemporary and relevant.
* How well did you feel like in-class activities prepared you for success on the assignments?
* Instructor responses: Online activities and discussions in COMM1085 have been designed to target specifically those skills and concepts that students will need to use on their assignments.
* How comfortable were you giving oral presentations?
* Instructor response: Students will not be required to give oral presentations in COMM1085; instead, online discussions will allow you to interact with other students and the instructor in a meaningful way; moreover, many of the communication and critical thinking skills and concepts that we explore during the semester can be easily transferred from a written context to an oral context.
* How relevant did you feel the writing assignments were to the direction you saw your career headed?   
  + Instructor response: The assignments in this course have been designed to target specific communication and critical thinking skills that are necessary for success across the workplace spectrum.
* How helpful was the feedback you received in guiding your future work?   
  + Instructor response: Your instructor will use detailed rubrics to assess all of your assignments in this course; these rubrics are visible to you before you complete the assignment so you can see exactly how you will be assessed. Also, your instructor will use software to make detailed comments on your work, so this feedback can be more extensive, easier to read, and easier to access than traditional “pen and paper” comments.

**TEXT**

Comparison of traditional English course and COMM1085 (communications course)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | “English” course | Communications course |
| Assignments | - “essays”  - creative writing (e.g. short stories, poetry) | - Summary writing  - Analytical writing (e.g. explaining a process, comparing two products)  - Persuasive writing (e.g. convincing a client to use a particular material for a project)  - Email writing (strategies for effective and concise business communication) |
| Readings | - Emphasis on fiction (novels, short stories)  - Drama  - Poetry | - Emphasis on non-fiction:   1. newspaper articles 2. opinion columns 3. academic journals 4. magazines  * trade journals |
| Learning Objectives | - understanding literary themes and techniques | - achieving clarity and effectiveness in written communication  - accuracy in reading for meaning |

## Communications in the Workplace

**PRE-THINKING ACTIVIT**Y

Students complete a short T or F quiz about value of communications skills in workplace in anticipation of a brief presentation of support for the claim “communications skills are in high demand in today’s workforce”

1. In my future career I will be asked to read a variety of written work.

* True: In all forms of careers today we are asked to read a variety of written work. You may be asked to read a patient’s medical history, a memo from the company president on policy changes, or an instructional document outlining expectations and plans for a project you are working on.
* False: It’s true, many jobs rely primarily on a set of hard skills. But most also have a reading component embedded somewhere in the workday. Can you imagine being asked to read a patient’s medical history, a memo from the company president on policy changes, or an instructional document outlining expectations and plans for a project you are working on?

2. When I am employed in my career of choice, I will not be asked to communicate my point of view.

* False: As a valued employee in whichever field you are looking to work in, you will be asked to communicate what you think about a variety of situations. You might be asked to report on why a client was unhappy with a service provided, email your boss to discuss your thoughts on upcoming HR policy changes, or create a proposal for a future client to entice them to work with your firm.
* True: Really? Consider the following: as a valued employee in whichever field you are looking to work in, you will be asked to communicate what you think about a variety of situations. You might be asked to report on why a client was unhappy with a service provided, email your boss to discuss your thoughts on upcoming HR policy changes, or create a proposal for a future client to entice them to work with your firm.

3. When I am working, I will have the opportunity to think about what is being communicated to me and think about why I have been given this information and how it can be applied into my work.

* True: Understanding and thinking critically about what is communicated to you in your job is vital. You might have the opportunity to work within a company where you will have to question my benefit plans are changing and how that will impact you and your family. Additionally, you could work within a professional designation such as the College of Nurses or the College of Trades and have to read, understand, and perhaps challenge changes that these governing bodies would like to make to your field of employment. For example, when these regulatory bodies raise their yearly membership fees they will often first survey their members to ensure this is appropriate.
* False: Do you think you might have the opportunity to work within a company where you will have to ask questions to better understand your job requirements? Or perhaps you’ll have to think critically about how new policies and procedures will affect you personally — say, for example, your benefit plans are changing and you need to understand how that will impact you and your family. Additionally, you could work within a professional designation such as the College of Nurses or the College of Trades and have to read, understand, and perhaps challenge changes that these governing bodies would like to make to your field of employment. For example, when these regulatory bodies raise their yearly membership fees they will often first survey their members to ensure this is appropriate.

**TEXT**

**Communication Skills in High Demand**

As the modern workforce moves toward more automated work done by sophisticated machines and artificial intelligence programs, well-honed communication skills become even more valuable.

In fact, according to [a 2015 survey](http://hiring.workopolis.com/research/thinkopolis/viii-skills/) of job postings conducted by career site Workopolis, “[communications is the clear stand out skill](http://hiring.workopolis.com/research/thinkopolis/viii-skills-infographic/) appearing in most job postings” (Workopolis, 2015, p.2). This report also found that demand for good communications skills was seen across a wide range of fields, including the following:

* “Over 60 per cent of **Healthcare and Wellness** jobs require good Communication Skills
* Almost half (47 per cent) of **Technology & Digital Media** jobs require good Communication Skills
* An equal number (47 per cent) of **Sales & Business Development** jobs request good Communication Skills
* 3 in 5 **Marketing** job ads ask for good Communication Skills”  
    
  (Workopolis, 2015, p.2)

**Tips for Employers**In addition, the same Workopolis report offered the following “tips for employers”:

* “Give a candidate's resume and cover letter a close read – not just for the facts, but for their use of language. Are they well-written and error free? Are they articulate, or do they use the same words and phrases repeatedly throughout?
* Ask behavioural-style questions in the job interview. "Tell me about a time when…" This forces the candidate to tell you a story rather than merely repeating facts they may have rehearsed. Are they well-spoken and able to converse? See if they can speak intelligently on a topic they may not have prepared for in advance.
* Are they socially savvy? It's important to note whether a person can read their audience and knows how to engage in conversation and when to stop talking.”  
    
  (Workopolis, 2014, pp.4-5)

**Demand for Critical Thinking Growing**

In addition to communications skills, critical thinking skills — the ability to ask relevant questions, to evaluate options, to read between the lines — are increasingly in-demand. The *Wall Street Journal* reported in 2014 that, according to “according to an analysis by career-search site Indeed.com…mentions of critical thinking in job postings [had] doubled since 2009” ([Korn](http://www.wsj.com/articles/bosses-seek-critical-thinking-but-what-is-that-1413923730), 2014, para. 3)

As you can see, employers are looking for workers in the modern age to think and communicate, on top of the knowledge and skills specific to individual fields.

**Highlight course description / learning outcomes (maybe have “unit outcomes” drop-down when students click on each of the course outcomes**

1. Identify purpose, audience, and thesis in a variety of text.
   1. Identify reading and writing tasks as they apply to college and the workplace
   2. Apply pre-reading skills and strategies
   3. Identify purpose and audience for various readings
   4. Identify thesis, main ideas, and supporting details in a reading
2. Employ critical thinking to analyse source, voice, bias, meaning, argument, and evidence.
   1. Identify rhetorical patterns and apply them to different writing tasks
   2. Identify argument, assumptions, and bias in readings
   3. Evaluate reasons and evidence in a written document
   4. Distinguish fact from opinion
   5. Infer meaning from a reading
3. Summarize college-level readings to identify main idea and key points.
   1. Identify main idea and key points
   2. Organize the points according to the text
   3. Paraphrase passages from written text
   4. Write an academic or workplace summary
4. Express a point of view in response to a written prompt.
   1. Write effectively in response to a prompt
   2. Write a focused thesis statement and clear topic sentences
   3. Use appropriate tone and style for the audience and purpose
   4. Express an organized, coherent argument in writing
5. Apply the three-step process (plan, write, revise) to create a variety of academic and workplace documents.
   1. Determine purpose and audience when writing
   2. Develop writing skills by incorporating feedback from others
   3. Apply the three-step writing process (plan, write, revise)
   4. Create academic and workplace documents
   5. Use transitions to create unity and coherence in paragraphs
   6. Produce an outline that is unified, organized, and coherent
6. Apply knowledge of standard Canadian English grammar, spelling and punctuation to academic and professional writing.
   1. Apply standard Canadian English to written work
   2. Write correct sentences
   3. Edit written work for clarity, correctness, conciseness, tone, and accuracy
7. Integrate sources using appropriate documentation format.
   1. Apply the research process to write for workplace and academic purposes
   2. Use the internet and libraries to conduct research
   3. Use critical thinking skills to gather and evaluate sources to support a thesis or argument
   4. Apply an appropriate style of documentation to avoid plagiarism

**ACTIVITY**

Survey 🡪 Students respond to the following three prompts:

* Choose three from the selection below that you believe you will use most in your academic career.
* Choose three from the selection below that you believe you will use most in your working career.
* Choose the one thing from this list that makes you feel intimidated or apprehensive the most.

…Based on the following 7 statements (paraphrases of the 7 course learning outcomes)

Statements

1. I will use reading skills to understand the audience, purpose, and main idea of various texts.
2. I will be asked to use critical thinking skills and respond to questions of bias, evidence and source in a variety of texts.
3. I will need to summarize video, texts, ideas or designs.
4. I will need to confidently and effectively give my point of view in response to a problem or question.
5. I will need to plan, write, and revise written pieces of work.
6. I will be expected to use standard Canadian English grammar in all of my communications.
7. I will be able to locate and use appropriate sources to support my opinions and reference these sources in an appropriate manner.

After they complete the survey, instructor responses would be provided in response to their choices for the third prompt only:

Instructor response

1. We are going to tackle learning about tailoring our writing to our audience and purpose very early on in this class and we will continue to come back to these ideas through the whole class!
2. In a society that often provides us with information overload, it is important that we learn to think critically about all the information we are presented with. You will be asked to do this many times in this class, and you will be able to practice your responses to different texts.
3. Learning to summarize is a skill but learning this skill is something that we will practice through the whole course. With practice, you can become a lean, mean summarizing machine!
4. We all know someone who can give their point of view on a topic whether its asked for or not. Through this course you will practice giving your point of view in a professional manner that illustrates your attention to sound research to support what you think.
5. We don’t always get things write… I mean right! Learning to plan, write, and then revise will improve your writing skills. Better than that it will likely save you time, improve your grades, and maybe even earn you a promotion one day!
6. Don’t know where to place a comma? Hint: the correct place is not shaking them onto your paper like sprinkles on a sundae. Can’t remember when to use effect and affect? You are not alone! Practicing using proper Canadian English and grammar is something that we are going to focus on all term. We will start small and build you up to be a grammar star!
7. No one likes a thief! You are going to learn how to let others know that you are using someone else’s words and ideas, so that you aren’t accused of stealing them. I will make sure to let you know where to find resources to help and give you feedback to help you learn how to reference your materials through the whole term.

(As students complete the task, it would be great if they could see a tallied, anonymous infographic showing what was chosen by their peers.)

**ACTIVITY**

Students match workplace scenarios to skills connected to learning outcomes

Business

* A marketing rep needs to identify the needs of his potential clients before she can prepare a successful sales presentation (1)
* In order to win start-up funding from an investor, an entrepreneur needs to prepare a business plan that includes a detailed and accurate forecast of potential earnings (7)
* A human resources manager needs to write a proposal to the vice-president of the company to fund two new junior HR jobs in the department. (5)

Health Care

* A fitness trainer needs to present his client with a detailed fitness plan and explain why it’s the appropriate plan for the client’s needs (4)
* A nurse needs to accurately and concisely document the patient’s symptoms. (3)

Tech

* A software engineer has to produce a “pseudo-code” that documents and describes in simple terms the intended operations of a computer program before getting approval from the project manager to begin work on the code. (5)
* A food processing technician needs to cite food safety guidelines to confirm that all machines and procedures are in compliance with federal standards. (7)

Community Services / PSI

* A police officer records detailed notes of his interaction and subsequent arrest of a suspect. The notes are later called upon in court as evidence for the prosecution. (6) (3)
* A social worker needs to read the case history of a new client in order to prepare for their first meeting. (2)
* An ECE needs to write an email to a child’s parents recommending a speech therapy consultation for the child. (4)

Media and Design

* A social media coordinator for a retail clothing company needs to communicate with customers and the public on a regular basis through postings to twitter, Facebook, Instagram and other social media platforms. (6)
* An interior decorator bidding on a project to design the new corporate headquarters of a growing start-up needs to read the request for proposals and the company’s website in order to understand the project requirements and the client’s likely preferences. (1) and (2)

Trades and Apprenticeship

* A renovation technician needs to refer to the Ontario Building Code in the plans for a new project. (7)
* A powerline technician needs to write an incident report following an on-the-job injury sustained by a co-worker. (3)

## Active Reading

**TEXT**

**What is Active Reading?**

Have you ever sat down to read a chapter in a textbook, determined to soak it all in, only to find your eyelids drooping after a couple of pages? Then you realize you’ve read the same sentence three times in a row, and it’s just not sinking in?

Or maybe you’ve experienced this: with your highlighter at the ready, you begin to read the article that’s been assigned for class this week; only before long you realize you’ve highlighted so much of the first page that it’s wet and mostly yellow?

If these situations sound familiar, you’re in good company; these frustrations are common. Why? Because too often we attempt to read our textbooks, articles, and reports — the things we have to read for school and work — the same way we would read something for pleasure, like a magazine, or a novel, or a website.

When we read those kinds of texts, we want to be entertained, so it’s appropriate to let the text do all of the work and transport us to another time and place. But when we are reading for meaning — when we need to absorb and use the information delivered by the text — then we need to read in a different way: we need to use active reading strategies

As the name suggests, these strategies require us to be active in our search for meaning, asking questions of what we read, making notes as we go. In this style of reading, the reader is in charge of the process, which means that you can read sections out of order, go back and forth between sections, and focus on key areas.

**Skimming and Scanning**

There are two key parts of active reading: skimming and scanning

**Skimming**

* + Skimming is a method of reading that provides the reader with a quick overview of the text. When someone “skims” a text, they are not reading in the traditional sense, from left to right, top to bottom. Instead, the reader moves his or her eyes across the page quickly, attempting to get a sense of obvious features, such as
    1. Overall length
    2. Number and length of paragraphs
    3. Headings or sub-headings
    4. Graphics or illustrations
    5. Bolded words
    6. Tone / style
  + Let’s use [this textbook chapter](http://open.lib.umn.edu/writingforsuccess/chapter/6-1-purpose-audience-tone-and-content/) to see the idea of skimming in practice. Even though you are just taking a quick glance at the whole chapter, are you still able to draw a few conclusions about the text?
    1. What are the three main elements that shape the content of a paragraph? (Purpose, Audience, Tone)
    2. How many different kinds of academic purposes are presented? (4) What are they called? (Summary, Analysis, Synthesis, Evaluation)
    3. How many traits or characteristics can we use to describe or anticipate our imaginary reader? (4) What are the names given to these traits and characteristics? (Demographics, Education, Prior Knowledge, Expectations).
    4. How many key takeaways does the text suggest you should be able to retain after reading it more thoroughly? (6)
  + Obviously, this quick review of the text leaves us with unanswered questions — we wouldn’t be able to say we’ve learned what it has to say.
  + But, we are now in a better position to retain the information it contains, because we’ve created a kind a basic outline in our mind of the overall text. When we can read it again more closely, this outline will help us to sort high-priority information from low-priority information, and it’ll provide us with a foundation for new information to be stored.

**Scanning**

This goal of this method is to quickly acquire a general understanding of the text’s main ideas.

To get an overall sense of the main ideas, you can search for or target specific sections of the text where you might expect to find the most meaning:

* + Title / Sub-title
  + Table of Contents
  + Introductory paragraph
  + Concluding paragraph
  + Topic sentence
  + Concluding sentence
  + Headings / sub-headings
  + Bolded words
  + Call-out boxes

**Video Capture**

Demonstration of scanning with “Online learning will make college cheaper. It will also make it better” by L. Rafael Reif, published in Time. 10/7/2013, Vol. 182 Issue 15, p54.

Script: (approx. 5 min) (numbers correspond to pre-determined spots on the text)

* + - 1. First we can check the title of the text to see what it can tell us about the focus and style of the text. Here we might interpret two key pieces of information: we can get a sense of the topic — online learning at the post-secondary level — from the words “Colleges” and “Online”; and, of course, we can tell that the author is taking a positive position on this topic, from the words “Better” and “More Affordable.” In addition, we can anticipate that this text will take the style of an argument because “Better” is a subjective description that will need to be supported with reasons.
      2. Before we dive into the body of the text we should also consider the sub-title and the author. The word “how” in the sub-title suggests that the author is going to outline some kind of process for implementing online learning into the college system. Meanwhile, we might also notice that the author, Rafael Reif, is the President of a prominent post-secondary institution, M.I.T. This insight might give us confidence that the author is qualified to speak on this subject — and therefore make us more receptive to his argument; it might also make us wonder how his position as a post-secondary executive might shape or colour his perspective on the subject, in the same way that a student, a parent, a professor, or a prospective employer might also view proposed changes to post-secondary education through a particular lens.
      3. Now, we get to do something really radical: let’s jump to the end of the text — often a writer will attempt to conclude their argument with a clear and succinct presentation of their position. Indeed, it’s easy for us to identify the author’s position here: online learning is a positive innovation because it allows a greater number of students to learn, teaches them more effectively, and at a lower cost. Okay, great. But, now, we likely want to know “how” online learning will generate these improvements. And for that we’ll need to go back into the text.
      4. Even though we haven’t actually *read* much of the text at all, we already know a great deal of information. And we can use this information to “scan” the text even more efficiently. Remember, we already know the author’s main argument, and now we want to better understand his supporting reasons. So if we examine just the first sentence of each paragraph, we can pretty quickly determine whether that paragraph is going to provide the insight we’re seeking. The first two paragraphs seem to be introducing the topic still, but the third paragraph seems to be focusing on more specific advantages of online learning (“focus on what digital learning is good for”). If we zoom in to third sentence we see Reif’s first claim: Online learning is beneficial because it “opens possibilities” for the scores of people who don’t live geographically close to a post-secondary education. Now, at this point, I might be tempted to read on — I might want to learn if the author provides support for this claim, for example. But it’s important at this point to move forward with our scan in order to create an overall understanding of the text, almost like a map of a new and unfamiliar terrain; I’ll leave a note in the margin here to indicate that this is his first point — I’ll call it “Benefit #1: Increased access” — and I’ll continue with my scan.
      5. Looking at the first sentence of the next paragraph, it’s clear that now we will be presented with a discussion of online learning’s “educational advantages”. Notice also the word, “first”, that begins the second sentence. This is a helpful signal word that suggests subsequent points might be similarly “numbered”. To continue with my mapping, I’ll make another note in the margin of this paragraph to remind myself later that this is where I should look for a detailed discussion of Reif’s next point: Online learning is beneficial because it is very good at teaching “basic concepts”.
      6. In the next paragraph, we know the author is going to introduce another supporting point because we see the words “second advantage” jump out at us. Scanning to the next line we see that advantage is “flexibility for both students and faculty” and we can make a note of it in the margin.
      7. “Third advantage” grabs our attention as we scan to the next paragraph, and quickly we are directed to Reif’s next point: “online learning is beneficial because it helps colleges gather data about learning patterns and habits.
      8. Scanning the first sentence of the next paragraph, the word “however” signals a potential change in direction: indeed, this paragraph seems to be listing aspects of education that are best achieved in person. I might mark this in the margins as “advantages to in-person learning”.
      9. As we scan the next paragraph, though, we might highlight the word “but” — this suggests Reif is going to counter the apparent weakness in his argument which he just acknowledged in the previous paragraph. Yes, here (“clear the way”) we see his next point — “online learning creates more time and space for in-person learning”.
      10. We’ve almost returned to the place we started our scan — the final paragraph. In this second-to-last (or “penultimate”) paragraph, we might immediately notice the many question marks. Without even looking at the questions in depth yet — we will, though, when we return for a more close reading — we might make a note that the author ends by “looking ahead to the future”. This tells us that the author seems to be starting a conversation about potential changes — rather than, say, trying to conclusively settle a long-simmering debate.
      11. To conclude this initial scan, we might recall our initial questions and predictions: is the author advocating for the growth of online learning in post-secondary education? Did we get a clear sense of “why” this would make learning better? Did we get an explanation of “how” to implement this change? Did the author’s position as a College president inform his argument? Obviously, these are questions that we can only answer in part upon completion of this initial scan. But without too much time and effort, we have assembled a pretty solid ‘map’ of the text. Now, when we read it again more closely, we’ll be able to distinguish main ideas from supporting points, and supporting points from details and examples.

**ACTIVITY**

Hotspot: Students will practice “active reading” by clicking on select sections of the text to identify places where one should look when conducting an initial skim/scan of a text

Text: Krause, M., Corts, D., Smith, S. & Dolderman, D. (2015). “The Science of Psychology.” *An Introduction to Psychological Science — Canadian Edition.* pp. 2-5. Pearson: Toronto.

1. **Title**

* The title points to a very broad topic, which indicates this is an introductory chapter

1. **Learning Objectives: Know / Understand**

* We should be on the look-out for terms and steps that we’ll need to remember

1. **Learning Objectives: Apply / Analyse**

* We should also be looking for models, steps, and terms we’ll need to use

1. **Topic / Concluding sentences in paragraph 3**

* Our eye is drawn to the phrase “The purpose of this opening section”
* This prepares us for a “complex” and “challenging” discussion. Now I won’t be worried if it feels like a lot to take in.

1. **Focus Questions**

* These questions can give us a context for all that we’re going to learn in this section: the focus is on “how” — how does psychology work and how does it help?

1. **Heading — Scientific Method**

* We remember this was one of the concepts identified in the learning objectives
* Until we see another large, red heading, we’ll know that everything we read is about the scientific method

1. **Subheading #1 — Hypothesis: Making Predictions**
2. **Subheading #2 — Theories: Explaining Phenomena**
3. **Subheading #3 — The Biopsychosocial Model**

* This was another term that appeared in the learning objectives; we’ll need to know this model well enough to use it.

1. **Quick Quiz**

* We can match this with our scan of the learning objectives to highlight the terms and concepts that are most significant in this chapter.
* Looking at the quiz before we even read the chapter in detail can help us to filter out less-important information.

1. **Graphic of Scientific Method**

* As we work our way back to the beginning of the chapter, we can stop to quickly review this flowchart
* Recognizing some of the key terms that we’ve already noticed, this may be an important piece to review later.

1. **Bolded and italicized terms throughout**

* These are clearly key terms and concepts that we’ll be expected to understand; we know this because the learning objectives stated that we need to know the key terminology of the scientific method.

## Audience and Purpose

**TEXT**

Before a writer begins to craft her message, she needs to determine the answer to two fundamental questions: “Who am I writing this for?” and “What am I trying to do?”

In the first question, she is asking, “who is the audience for this text?” and in the second she’s asking, “what is the purpose of this text?”

Determining audience and purpose is a key step for a writer because the answers to these questions will shape many of the choices the writer makes. Here are just a few examples of the choices that a writer can make only after they have a clear idea of who they’re writing for and what they’re trying to achieve:

* Word choice / vocabulary level: sophisticated or basic?
* Tone and style: serious or humorous?
* Supporting information: statistical evidence or personal experience?

As readers, we also have to understand and be able to identify the likely audience and purpose of a text, for if we are going to judge whether a piece of writing is successful, we need to know what it was meant to do and who it was meant for.

**Audience**

Here are some specific ways that you can think about the person or group of people who are most likely to be reading what you’ve written (borrowed/adapted from <http://open.lib.umn.edu/writingforsuccess/chapter/6-1-purpose-audience-tone-and-content/)> :

* **Demographics.** These measure important data about a group of people, such as their age range, their ethnicity, their religious beliefs, or their gender.
* **Education.** Education considers the audience’s level of schooling or specific training.
* **Expectations.** These indicate what readers will look for while reading your assignment. Readers may expect consistencies in the assignment’s appearance, such as correct grammar and traditional formatting. Readers may also have content-based expectations based on your role or on how you’ve presented your ideas.
* **Prior knowledge.** This refers to what the audience already knows about your topic. If your readers have studied certain topics, they may already know some terms and concepts related to the topic.

**Purpose**

This aspect of a text can be more difficult to describe than audience. Still, every writer intends to achieve some goal or outcome with their writing.

Here are some potential objectives that a writer might have in mind when they craft their message:

* + To entertain
  + To describe
  + To explain
  + To analyze
  + To argue
  + To persuade
  + To inform
  + To comment
  + To instruct
  + To advise
  + To review

Notice that each of those objectives are expressed as verbs — that is, as action words. It’s an important observation because it reminds us that academic and workplace writing is simply another kind of tool used to solve a problem.

**ACTIVITY**

Identifying Audience and Purpose: students are presented with three texts and they identify the best fit for audience and purpose from a dropdown list of choices. When students select an answer, they should be presented with a brief explanation / analysis of the answer.

* Rick Mercer’s Rant: [Election 101](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UOWtXc2dUHw) (MercerReport YouTube)
  + Audience: College-age Canadians (directly speaking to “you”, location/style of video)
  + Purpose: persuade (conclusion focused on what viewer “should” do), entertain (attempts to insert humour into his argument)
* “[Youth will not vote in the Ontario election and here's why](http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/education/youth-dont-vote-because-they-dont-like-what-they-see/article19114640/)” (Globe and Mail)
  + Audience: Older Canadians, people in authority positions (parents, other writers / politicians / academics, etc.) who complain that young people don’t vote (para. 1 🡪 “politicians, pundits, and the public will complain about the youth voter turnout rate and call my generation politically apathetic.” and para. 6 “If you want youth to be politically active, you must accept that this may come with consequences you don’t like.”)
  + Purpose: explain/analyze, argue/convince
* Excerpt (.pdf attached) from [*Estimation of Voter Turnout*](http://www.elections.ca/content.aspx?section=res&dir=rec/part/estim&document=index&lang=e) *by Age Group**and Gender at the 2015 General Election* (Elections Canada)
  + Audience: Highly educated, academics, journalists, gov’t (detailed, dense, high vocabulary level)
  + Purpose: inform, report / document (factual information without opinion, citations to other studies)

## Topic vs. Thesis

**TEXT**

Understanding “purpose” is important because it allows us to understand what a text is trying to do — and, ultimately, to assess whether it’s effective in achieving its purpose.

Of course, we also have to understand what a text is “about” — what issue is it focusing on? When we ask this question, we are asking about the **topic** of text. The word ‘topic’ comes from the ancient Greek word *topos*, which means “place”. Therefore, we can think of the topic of a text as a location for a discussion.

Finally, we need also to know what a text is saying. In writing where the author presents a particular position on an issue — his or her interpretation of the topic — then we have located a **thesis.** Often a thesis is referred to as an “argument,” which we can understand as an opinion that needs to be defended by logic, supported by evidence, and illustrated with examples.

**ACTIVITY**

Here are three opinion columns that explore the same topic:

* [The Future of Machines with Feelings](http://www.macleans.ca/society/technology/the-future-of-machines-with-feelings/), by Scott Feschuk (Maclean’s — Jan 24, 2015)
* [The Lost Boys](http://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/the-lost-boys-video-games-more-fun-than-growing-up/article31464598/): Video Games More Fun than Growing Up, by Margaret Wente (Globe and Mail — Aug 20, 2016)
* [Textese May be the Death of English](http://www.newsweek.com/technology-textese-may-be-death-english-87727), by Lily Huang (Newsweek — Aug 1, 2008)

Use your skimming and scanning skills to quickly review the texts. Now test your understanding of topic and thesis with this short knowledge check.

Which of the following best describes the topicof the three columns:

* 1. Technology is going to ruin civilization as we know it (this would be a thesis)
  2. Technology (This is a potential topic but it’s too vague/general)
  3. The impact of new forms of digital technology
  4. The impact of machines that have the ability to recognize human emotions (This is too specific; it only suits the first column.)

Which of the columns features a positive, optimistic thesis?

1. Future of Machines with Feelings (No, Feschuk is very skeptical of emotionally responsive devices)
2. The Lost Boys (No, Wente presents a very critical assessment of the way video games are being used by young North American males.)
3. The Death of English (Yes, Huang suggests that texting is just another stage in the evolution of language and it will lead to interesting innovations.)

## Summary

(I’m going to leave this section blank because there is obviously a lot of content here and I’d welcome suggestions on the length and depth that is typically provided in this section.

## Evaluation

**ASSIGNMENT**

Diagnostic Writing Assignment

The “Writing Diagnostic” assignment calls for you to demonstrate your current academic reading and writing abilities. It will neither be graded nor will it count toward your final grade.

It will, however, allow you to better understand the type of work we’ll be doing in this course, and it will allow me to quickly assess your current reading and writing level.

It will also help me to assess your language level and to determine whether you would be more successful and better served by placement in the EAL section of COMM1085, intended for those students who are learning English as a language in addition to their primary language.

**Writing Diagnostic**

**Due Date: [***insert Week 1 due date here***]**

**Your Task:**

After reading Kim Flachmann’s (2014) “Reading and Writing in College,” choose **one** of the following prompts and write a concise response in paragraph form.

* Describe an academic or workplace scenario in which critical thinking skills (as Flachmann defines them) are necessary. You may share a personal experience or create an example.
* The author argues that reading and writing skills are “necessary for surviving both in college and on the job” (para. 7). Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not?

**Reminders:**

* Please write your response *individually* and take your time.
* Be sure to read over your work carefully before you send it off to your professor.

**Length:** one page (no more than 250 words)

**Submission Instructions:** **[***specify hard copy or electronic submission***]**

*\*This assignment is not graded and does not count towards your final mark*

**Reference:**

Flachmann, K. (2014). *Mosaics: Reading and Writing Essays* (6th ed.). United States: Pearson.